



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**
Memphis District

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Corps of Engineers ready for high water response in greater Memphis area

MEMPHIS, Tenn., March 22, 2011 – With Mississippi River levels rising in the greater Memphis area, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is stepping up its tempo of operations and conducting patrols of levees, floodwalls and other flood works in this area.

The Corps of Engineers typically initiates Phase I floodfight activities in this region whenever the river gage at Memphis reaches 37 feet with a sustained rise forecasted. As of 8 a.m. on March 22, the river stage at Memphis is 36.3 feet and is forecasted to crest at 37 feet Wednesday morning, March 23. Flood or “bankfull” stage at Memphis is 34 feet on the Memphis gage.

“The protection of life and property is our number one priority,” Col. Vernie Reichling, commander of the Corps’ Memphis District said. “We are prepared, staying vigilant and working with local authorities to ensure that our flood risk management system provides the highest level of protection possible.”

Although the river is forecasted to reach the minimal level for Phase I floodfight activation briefly, the Corps’ Memphis District Emergency Manager Steve Barry said geotechnical and other engineering personnel have been sent to the field to perform precautionary inspections of all flood control works in the greater Memphis area.

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“Although we don’t expect to officially begin a floodfight in this area, we are taking all prudent measures to ensure we are ready,” Barry said. “It’s the right thing to do to ensure we are prepared.”

Meanwhile, Memphis District officials continue a Phase II floodfight in the northern portion of their area of responsibility. These include the areas in and around Cairo, Ill, New Madrid, Mo., and the Reelfoot-Obion area of West Tennessee.

During Phase II floodfight activities, Corps of Engineers personnel conduct intensive monitoring of flood control works including levees, floodwalls and pumping stations. They also make technical and materiel assistance available to local communities and flood control organizations to aid them in their floodfighting efforts.

The Corps’ Division Headquarters in Vicksburg, Miss, coordinates all floodfight activities in the Mississippi Valley. The Corps’ Emergency Operations Center in Memphis is directing these activities in conjunction with the affected states, levee districts and other local interest groups.

The Federal flood protection works in the Mississippi Valley protect many thousands of homes, millions of lives and vast tracts of fertile cropland. The Memphis District’s flood control system has prevented more than \$4.3 billion in flood damages and protected more than five million acres of cropland in the last decade alone.